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Chairman: Mr. Ali ..... (Malaysia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Saha

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 129: Programme planning (A/62/16 and A/62/81)

1. **Mr. Adam** (Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination) introduced the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on its forty-seventh session (A/62/16).

2. Chapter III B of the report, which dealt with changes to the biennial programme plan as reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009, contained a number of conclusions and recommendations on programmes and subprogrammes.

3. Under the item entitled "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", the Committee had considered the Secretary-General's report on progress and impact assessment of management improvement measures and had recommended that the General Assembly should review the usefulness of the preparation of the report and decide on the necessity of the further consideration of the report by the General Assembly and the Committee.

4. The Committee had also considered the report of the Secretary-General on experience gained in the planning and budgeting process and had recommended, inter alia, that the General Assembly should decide to maintain the strategic framework as the principal policy directive of the United Nations and to continue to include part one: plan outline in that framework. The Committee had also requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on new and/or revised mandates that the General Assembly had approved subsequent to the adoption of the biennial programme plan.

5. On the topic of evaluation, the Committee had considered the reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the in-depth evaluation of political affairs. In that connection, it had recommended that the General Assembly should endorse a number of the recommendations made by OIOS and had reiterated the importance of the evaluation function.

6. With regard to coordination questions, the Committee had made a number of recommendations relating to the annual overview report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2006/07. It had welcomed the latter's initiative to conduct a review of its functioning and emphasized the need to make the Board more efficient, results-oriented, transparent and accountable to Member States. The Committee had also made recommendations on the Secretary-General's report on United Nations system support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), welcoming the renewed commitment of the United Nations system to provide coordinated support for NEPAD, as evidenced by the emergence of the enhanced 10-year capacity-building programme.

7. At its forty-seventh session, the Committee had also made a number of concrete proposals designed to improve its working methods and procedures within the framework of its mandate. The Committee's related conclusions and recommendations were contained in paragraphs 146 to 159 of its report.

8. **Ms. Van Buerle** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on experience gained in the planning and budgeting process (A/62/81), drew attention to paragraph 10, which described the background to the issue. The experience gained since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 58/269 suggested that the two-year duration of the plan was appropriate, since it provided programme managers with a planning tool that was easily translated into a biennial programme budget. Since the programmatic elements of the proposed programme budget now had to be identical to the plan, the preparation of the budget was a less time-consuming exercise. Member States did, however, have the opportunity to review the plan prior to the start of the budget preparation and to provide the requisite guidance to the Secretary-General on the formulation of the budget to ensure implementation of the programme of work.

9. There had been general agreement on the presentation of the logical framework contained in part two: biennial programme plan. While there was still room for improvement, particularly with regard to the selection of meaningful key indicators, the format of the plan had, for the most part, been effective in implementing results-based management concepts. The focus was no longer on outputs and activities but rather on expected accomplishments and how to measure their achievement.

10. The Committee for Programme and Coordination was responsible for reviewing modifications to the

budget arising from new or revised mandates. In that regard, a number of changes had been made to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 and a consolidated report, contained in document A/62/80, had been submitted to the Committee together with the applicable budget sections. She also drew the Fifth Committee's attention to document A/62/80/Add.1, which described a number of further changes relating to programme 4, Peacekeeping operations, as requested by the Committee for Programme and Coordination in paragraph 62 of its report.

11. In accordance with the recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Coordination contained in its report on its forty-fifth session, the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 also contained the overall orientation for each programme presented in the biennial plan. Each budget section, by necessity, also contained a brief summary of budget matters with respect to overall changes to the section. Although different approaches had been taken to the presentation of part one: plan outline of the strategic framework for the bienniums 2006-2007 and 2008-2009, the General Assembly had, on both occasions, approved only part two: biennial programme plan. The Fifth Committee would therefore need to consider whether to continue including part one: plan outline in the strategic framework.

12. Linked to better planning, budgeting and implementation efforts was the adequacy of an effective monitoring and evaluation system. In its resolution 61/245, the General Assembly had requested a review of results-based management at the United Nations, the results of which would be presented to the Fifth Committee later in the session. Actions taken as a result of that review were expected to build on the gains made in programme planning and budgeting.

13. Depending on the decisions taken on the experience gained since the adoption of resolution 58/269, the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation would need to be reviewed and revised. Additional actions required of the General Assembly were set out in paragraph 43 of the report.

14. **Ms. Mesquita** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, said that the outcome of the forty-seventh session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination illustrated that it was possible for Member States to reach common ground when they had a shared interest in improving the functioning and effectiveness of the Organization.

15. The European Union commended the Committee for having engaged in a useful exchange of views on its activities, working methods and role within the United Nations system and welcomed the measures to enhance the effectiveness of its decisions. The European Union therefore reiterated its willingness to support the Committee in the discharge of its mandate, which consisted in giving guidance on programme design and assuring the necessary coordination in order to avoid duplication. In that connection, results-based management was an important precept.

16. Secretariat support was vital if the Committee for Programme and Coordination was to make the best use of its time. Furthermore, closer cooperation between the Committee and other relevant bodies and departments would enhance the quality and timeliness of its work.

17. **Ms. Jan** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, underscored the importance of the Committee for Programme and Coordination as the main subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council for planning, programming and coordination. The Committee not only gave the Secretariat guidance on programme design by interpreting legislative intent but also considered and developed evaluation procedures for the improvement of programme design and made recommendations to avoid duplication of work. The Committee's activities were central to the General Assembly's ability to provide oversight in the area of programme planning. In that connection, the Group of 77 and China commended the Committee for its efforts to improve its working methods. Those improvements, which would certainly add value to its work, illustrated the Committee's ability to respond to the Organization's changing needs.

18. The Group fully endorsed the recommendations contained in the Committee's report on its forty-seventh session. In particular, the Group agreed with the

Committee that the format, content and duration of the strategic framework, including part one: plan outline, should be maintained. Part one was an essential component of the plan because it captured the longer-term objectives of the Organization, but its format should be improved in order to better reflect agreed priorities.

19. While welcoming the Committee's guidance on the programmatic aspects of the changes to the biennial programme plan, the Group of 77 and China had noted with concern that not all the budget fascicles had been available during the Committee's discussion of the relevant item and that there were inaccuracies in the translation of some fascicles. It was particularly important for the General Assembly to take a decision on those changes because they would have a direct impact on the implementation of the budget for the forthcoming biennium.

20. The Group had taken note of the initiative of the Chief Executives Board to conduct a review of its functioning, and it highlighted the Committee's recommendation that the Board should continue to monitor the effective collaboration of system-wide efforts against hunger and poverty. As far as NEPAD was concerned, the Group of 77 and China agreed with the Committee that the Special Adviser on Africa had a crucial role to play in inter-agency cooperation and in institutionalizing United Nations system support for NEPAD. It therefore urged the Secretary-General to fill that post as soon as possible.

21. **Mr. Hillman** (United States of America), recalling that the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) had been established as the main subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council for planning, programming and coordination, indicated that the United States had vigorously supported it, expecting it to serve as an intergovernmental tool to coordinate activities within the United Nations system and to evaluate United Nations programmes in depth. The United States had served continuously as a member of CPC for 30 years.

22. As originally envisioned, CPC was to review legislative mandates, aiming to eliminate duplication and overlap in the work of the Organization and therefore to ensure that the resources provided by the Member States would be used to maximum advantage. However, there were currently over 9,000 current mandates. Accordingly, as CPC had failed in its primary coordination function and had made little progress in reforming its working methods and procedures, the United States had decided not to seek re-election when its term had expired in December 2006. In the previous several years, CPC had disappointed his country, which believed that priorities must be reoriented so that CPC functioned as intended. Until such a reorientation occurred, the United States wondered whether CPC should continue, at least in its current form.

23. There was a need for CPC to enhance its review of performance and evaluation reports and focus on addressing the relevance, usefulness, efficiency and effectiveness of the work carried out. It should provide action-oriented recommendations rather than serving as yet another forum for members to express and debate their differing views on programmes. As programme planning was essential to the ongoing success of the Organization, a lack of effective coordination would lead to the continued waste of valuable resources and a failure to achieve desired objectives.

24. **Mr. Spirin** (Russian Federation), recalled that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/269, CPC must review any changes to the biennial programme plan made, subsequent to its approval by the General Assembly, as a result of decisions of intergovernmental bodies. In the view of his delegation, CPC should be guided in that task by the need to ensure that expected accomplishments fully conformed with the mandates of the intergovernmental bodies and that indicators of achievement corresponded closely with expected accomplishments and were evaluated in quality and quantity terms.

25. Suitable methods of results-based planning should be developed to enable the Organization to react more precisely to new challenges and changes in priorities and also to make the Secretariat more accountable and allow the accomplishment of objectives and outputs to be assessed. However, his delegation understood that the Secretariat was often reluctant to include indicators of achievement in the programme plan because they were complex to establish. The Member States had an essential role to play in determining such indicators, so that the work of the Secretariat could be properly evaluated and so that the programme plan could be adjusted where appropriate. The system of programme planning should help the Member States to assess the achievement of

the objectives established and the adequacy of the resources allocated for that purpose.

26. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on experience gained in the planning and budgeting process (A/62/81), he said that, while the Russian Federation was generally satisfied with the course of the budget-process reform experiment, it saw a need for further improvement of the results-based budget format to ensure better use of financial and human resources while complying with the Organization's priorities and the principle of strict budget discipline. It was important to keep in mind that determining the Organization's priorities was the unconditional prerogative of the Member States, which must be involved at all stages of budget preparation and implementation, and that the Advisory Committee should continue to examine budget outlines and proposals.

27. Attention should be paid to the suggestions of the Secretary-General that the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning should be reviewed and that proposals for further modification should be submitted for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session; that results-based management should be further strengthened; and that senior managers should receive appropriate training on the programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation cycle.

28. Recalling that CPC, since its thirty-eighth session, had considered the agenda item entitled "Improving the working methods and procedures of the Committee for Programme and Coordination within the framework of its mandate", and that active debate had taken place on the future of CPC and on improving its output, his delegation noted that for the first time in a number of years CPC had managed to agree on a package of measures to improve its effectiveness and the input it provided for the Member States. Consequently, that recurring item could be removed from the agenda, thereby enabling CPC to focus on such substantive issues as strengthening strategic frameworks and improving programme planning and evaluation and to provide the Member States with targeted and reasoned recommendations on those and other issues.

29. **Mr. Yaroshevich** (Belarus) emphasized that CPC fulfilled an essential mandate as the main subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council concerned with planning, programming and coordination. Only active participation by the Member States would enable CPC to improve its work. In his view, its recommendations regarding the strategic framework for 2008-2009 fully reflected the priorities for the United Nations system. He welcomed the additional changes which CPC had made to the biennial programme plan and urged the Fifth Committee to examine closely programme 11, Environment, with an eye to the forthcoming expansion of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation.

30. He wished to emphasize that, while some aspects of the report of the Secretary-General on progress and impact assessment of management improvement measures (A/62/69) were positive, others required substantial improvement. The report should focus more on analysis and less on enumerating actions taken by the Secretariat. Although his delegation had noted some measure of progress in the implementation of the tasks which Member States had set the Secretariat in the fields of information and communications technology, improving budgeting and financial management and procurement, it took issue with the views expressed in paragraph 17 (b) of that report regarding enhancement of the Galaxy system, disagreeing that the seven-fold increase in applications for vacancies would lead to more effective management of human resources.

31. **Mr. Gehlot** (India) said that his delegation valued CPC's critical function of ensuring that the programmatic content of the budget conformed with legislative mandates. He welcomed the work of CPC at its recent session, despite the constraints brought by the problem of late issuance of documentation, which the Secretariat should address by adhering to the six-week rule. Demonstrating the spirit and will required to adapt to the fast-changing needs of the Organization, CPC had consolidated the progress it had made in recent years in improving its working methods and procedures.

32. The strategic framework should be maintained as the Organization's principal policy directive. Furthermore, the format of the plan outline should be improved to accurately reflect the priorities of the Organization, as agreed by the Member States, thus giving the Secretariat clear direction for the prioritizing of budget allocations and preventing high-priority areas such as development from being marginalized.

His delegation supported the CPC recommendations on the proposed programme budget for 2008-2009 but regretted that some budget fascicles had not been issued in time for CPC to consider them and expressed the hope that the problem would not recur. With specific reference to the CPC recommendations concerning the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), it agreed that the role of the Special Adviser on Africa in global coordination of support for the Partnership was vital, that the vacant post should be filled rapidly and that United Nations support for NEPAD should move from debate, assessments and recommendations to tangible action and results in respect of NEPAD projects.

33. Having always supported monitoring and evaluation in the programme planning cycle, his delegation underscored the importance of the timing and sequencing of evaluation reports to enable management to incorporate the lessons learned from the process in designing future programmes.

34. **Mr. Cumberbatch Miguén** (Cuba) said that, as programme planning was of vital importance in achieving goals and translating the legislative mandates of intergovernmental organs into programmes designed to improve development and well-being, every phase of the planning process should be monitored and the recommendations of CPC should be heeded. However, while the steps which CPC proposed to take to improve its working methods were commendable, it had failed to consider some parts of the proposed programme budget which had been expected to be ready at the previous session of the General Assembly in accordance with regulation 5.7 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. That had stood in the way of fulfilment of the provisions of paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 58/269 regarding Member States' participation in the budget process.

35. Noting a tendency for the programme narratives of the programme budget fascicles to diverge from the biennial programme plan, departing from intergovernmental agreements, reflecting the interests and vision of certain Member States and lacking the support of any legislative mandate, he emphasized that such a situation fostered mistrust between delegations and called into question the impartial and neutral role of the Secretariat. He urged the Secretary-General to ensure that the narratives and the programme plan for the biennium 2010-2011 were identical.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.